

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IO-12 EUR-25 DPW-01 AID-20 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /139 W

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R 300827 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9391

INFO USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5257

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: SETREP FOR MARCH 29, 1973

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM CAN THO MAR 29  
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE CAN THO 0105

1. SUMMARY: MILITARY ACTIVITY INCREASED SLIGHTLY YESTERDAY.  
IN ADDITION TO THE NORMALLY TROUBLESOME AREAS OF KIEN PHONG AND  
CHUONG THIEN, THE VC/ NVA RELAUNCHED OPERATIONS AGAINST RVNAF  
STRONG POINTS ON THE VAC LIEU COAST. THE TRI TON MISUNDERSTANDING  
IS ENDING WITH THE POLES HAVING RETURNED TO THAT ICCS SITE  
YESTERDAY. SLOPPY GVN PROTESTS TO THE ICCS CONTINUE TO PLAGUE  
THE COMMISSION' S WORK. IN THE POLITICAL DOMAIN WE HAVE OUR FIRST  
REPORT OF GVN AUTHORITIES USING PRESSURE TO FILL THE RANKS OF THE  
POPULAR FRONT. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: ( A) MILITARY ACTIVITY INCREASED SLIGHTLY  
AGAIN YESTERDAY TO 60 VC/ NVA INITIATED INCIDENTS. THE HEAVIEST  
ACTIVITY WAS IN CHUONG THIEN WHICH HAD BEEN QUIET FOR A WEEK.  
GVN CASUALTIES ARE STILL A LITTLE BELOW LAST WEEK' S LEVEL.  
VC/ NVA CASUALTIES ARE ABOUT HALF THE DAILY AVERAGE FOR LAST WEEK.  
THE TWO MOST SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN THE CHAU DOC-  
KIEN PHONG AREA.

( B) MARCH 29 THE VC LAUNCHED ATTACKS AGAINST FIVE OUTPOSTS IN  
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VINH CHAU DISTRICT OF BAC LIEU PROVINCE. COMMUNICATION WAS LOST WITH ALL FIVE OUTPOSTS AND THE RESULTS OF THE ATTACKS ARE NOT YET KNOWN. THE ACTION MAY BE ONE OF THE PERIODIC EXCURSIONS THE VC SOC TRANG LOCAL FORCE BATTALION MAKES INTO VINH CHAU, BUT IT FOLLOWS A PATTERN OF RECENT ATTACKS ON OUTPOSTS IN THE COASTAL AREA OF AN XUYEN AND BAC LIEU.

(C) A COMMERCIAL SHIP GOING UP THE MEKONG WAS DAMAGED BY A ROCKET ABOUT 5 KILOMETERS NORTH OF TAN CHAU CITY, CHAU DOC PROVINCE. THE GVN HAS NOT FORMALLY INTERRUPTED RIVER TRAFFIC BUT WE UNDERSTAND TRAFFIC IS SLOWER THAN USUAL. THE DAMAGED SHIP RETURNED TO TAN CHAU.

3. PEACEKEEPING FORCES: (A) ICCS: DURING A COURTESY CALL AT THE CONSULATE GENERAL MARCH 28, COL. MARION WIECZERZAK, REGION VII ICCS POLISH DELEGATION CHIEF, ANNOUNCED THAT THE POLISH DELEGATION HAD SENT A NEW TEAM TO TRI TON MARCH 28. COMMENTING ON THE THEFT OF THE PERSONAL BELONGINGS OF KAZIMIERZ LABA, A POLISH INTERPRETER (CAN THO' S 0059), COL. WIECZERZAK SAID THAT THE POLISH INTERPRETER HAD FAILED TO COORDINATE WITH HIS SUPERIORS HIS EFFORTS TO REGAIN HIS EFFECTS, WHICH INCLUDED AN UNAUTHORIZED VISIT TO THE CONGEN. LABA IS NOW SERVING IN HUE, THE COLONEL SAID.

(B). VINH BINH AUTHORITIES HAVE BLOWN THEIR THIRD REQUEST FOR AN ICCS INVESTIGATION. VINH BINH PROTESTED AN ALLEGED MARCH 23 VC CEASEFIRE VIOLATION WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF 13 POPULAR FORCE SOLDIERS IN SOUTHERN VINH BINH. UNDER CAREFUL HUNGARIAN QUESTIONING, THE VINH BINH CASE FELL APART. ACCOUNTS OF THE INCIDENT AND THOSE REPORTED KILLED WERE REPEATEDLY CONTRADICTED. THE ICCS LEFT UNCONVINCED AND WILL NOT PURSUE THE INVESTIGATION. TWO PREVIOUS VINH BINH REQUESTS FOR INVESTIGATIONS WERE SHABBILY DOCUMENTED AND SUFFERED A SIMILAR FATE UNDER ICCS SCRUTINY.

(C). JMC: THE USJMC HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO LEAVE THE DELTA ON MARCH 31. THE DRV DELEGATION WILL DEPART ON THE SAME DATE. PRG PLANS ARE NOT CLEAR. HOWEVER, WITH ONLY A SIX-MAN TEAM DEPLOYED IN REGION VII, AND ONLY A REDUCED ADVANCE TEAM IN REGION VI, THE PRG WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE OPERATIONS.

4. GVN ACTIVITIES: POLITICAL: COMPULSORY MEMBERSHIP IN THE DEMOCRACY PARTY (DP) IS COMMON PRACTICE THROUGHOUT THE DELTA. WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM AN GIANG THE FIRST REPORT THAT THE GVN IS USING SIMILAR TACTICS TO FILL THE POPULAR FRONT (PF).  
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SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THE AN GIANG PF TOLD GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES AND HIGH SCHOOLS TO REPORT THE EXACT NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS. THE PF THEN SENT PETITIONS OF AFFILIATION TO THE SCHOOLS AND ASKED THAT THEY BE FILLED OUT AND RETURNED. HOA HAO AND CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS ARE DELAYING THEIR ANSWERS, HOPING TO TEST THE SERIOUSNESS OF LOCAL GVN INTENT. MOST HOA HAO FACTIONS HAVE APPARENTLY JOINED THE PF WITHOUT MUCH COMPLAINT. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, COMPULSORY MEMBERSHIP IN THE DP HAS CAUSED PROBLEMS FOR THE HOA HAO AND DELAYED THE PARTY'S FORMATION. PRESSURE TO JOIN THE PF COULD NOW UNDERMINE ITS REPUTATION AS A BROAD AND LOW PRESSURE NATIONALIST FRONT.

(B) TACH PIECH, THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CAMBODIAN MONK IN THE DELTA, MET WITH PRESIDENT THIEU DURING THE FARMERS' DAY GATHERING IN CAN THO ON MARCH 26. TACH PIECH TOLD OUR BA XUYEN VICE CONSUL HE ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO PROMOTE RAPIDLY A CAMBODIAN TO BRIGADIER GENERAL. AT PRESENT THE HIGHEST RANKING CAMBODIAN IS A COLONEL. HE ALSO ASKED THAT THIEU SUSPEND GEN. NGHI'S ORDER AS IT AFFECTS CAMBODIANS, TRANSFERRING OFFICERS WHO HAVE SERVED FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS IN A SINGLE SECTOR. HE ALSO ASKED THAT DECREE LAW 120 ON REPLACING VILLAGE CHIEFS NOT BE APPLIED TO CAMBODIAN AREAS. THIEU MADE NO COMMITMENT. EVER SINCE THE CEASEFIRE, CAMBODIAN LEADERS HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF GVN POLITICAL NEEDS TO PRESS FOR REDRESS OF ETHNIC GRIEVANCES. TO DATE SAIGON HAS MADE NO SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS. SIGNED BARNES UNQUOTE BENNETT

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